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have demanded to know from where and whom they came. The toys were hidden in and under the bed and Peter played with them only at night. After supper, Peter undressed and went to bed; Catherine followed. As soon as both were in bed, Madame Krause, who slept in the next room, came in, locked their door, and brought out so many toy soldiers dressed in blue Holstein uniforms that the bed was covered with them. Whereupon Madame Krause, then in her fifties, joined Peter in moving them around as he commanded.

The absurdity of what they were doing, often until two in the morning, sometimes made Catherine laugh, but usually she simply endured. She could not move in bed, the whole surface being covered with toys, some of which were heavy. In addition, she worried that Madame Choglokova would hear of these nocturnal games. Sure enough, one evening toward midnight, she knocked at the bedroom door. It had a double lock, and those inside did not open it immediately because Peter, Catherine, and Madame Krause were scrambling to collect the toys from the top of the bed and cram them under the blankets. When Madame Krause eventually opened the door, Madame Choglokova entered, furious at having been kept waiting. Madame Krause explained that it had been necessary for her to go and get her key. Then Madame Choglokova asked why Catherine and Peter were not asleep. Peter replied curtly that he was not ready to sleep. Madame Choglokova lashed back that the empress would be furious to learn that the couple was not asleep at this late hour. Eventually, she left, grumbling. Peter began playing again and continued until he fell asleep.

The situation was farcical: a newly married couple constantly on guard lest they be caught playing with toys. Behind this farce lay the greater absurdity of a young husband playing with toys in the marital bed, leaving his young wife with nothing to do but to watch. (In her *Memoirs*, an older, more sophisticated Catherine commented wryly, "It seems to me that I was good for something else.") Yet the real context in which these games were played was as dangerous as it was bizarre. Elizabeth was a woman accustomed to having her way. These two impudent grand ducal children were thwarting her. She had done everything for them: she had reached out and brought them to Russia; she had loaded them with gifts, titles, and kindness; she had given them a magnificent wedding; all in the hope of a speedy fulfillment of her wish for an heir.

~~When, as the months passed, Elizabeth found her hope still frustrated, she was determined to know which of the pair was responsible.~~

Peter III  
and  
Catherine's  
early  
marriage

and it was returned to her in January. Eventually, she learned that Peter, having heard about the empress's gift to his wife, had become angry and had complained vehemently because nothing had been given to him. Alexander Shuvalov had reported this to the empress, who immediately sent the grand duke an order for a sum equal to what she had given Catherine—which is why the money had to be borrowed back from the original recipient.

Catherine  
Confined to bed  
after the birth  
of the  
Tsaravitch, who  
was taken from  
her at birth.

While cannonades, balls, illuminations, and fireworks celebrated her son's birth, Catherine remained in bed. On the seventeenth day after the delivery, she learned that the empress had assigned Sergei Saltykov to a special diplomatic mission: he was to deliver the formal announcement of her son's birth to the royal court of Sweden. "This meant," Catherine wrote, "that I was immediately going to be separated from the one person I cared about most. I buried myself in my bed where I did nothing but grieve. In order to stay there, I pretended to have continual pain in my leg which prevented me from getting up. But the truth was that I could not and would not see anybody in my sorrow."

Forty days after Catherine gave birth, the empress came back to her bedroom for a ceremony to mark the end of her confinement. Catherine had dutifully risen from her bed to receive the sovereign, but when Elizabeth saw her so weak and exhausted, she made her remain sitting in bed while prayers were read. The infant Paul was present, and Catherine was permitted to look at him from a distance. "I thought him beautiful and the sight of him raised my spirits a little," Catherine said, "but the moment the prayers were finished, the empress had him carried away and she also left." On November 1, Catherine received the formal congratulations of the court and the foreign ambassadors. For this purpose, a room was richly furnished overnight, and there, on a couch of rose-colored velvet embroidered with silver, the new mother sat and extended her hand to be kissed. Immediately after the ceremony, the elegant furniture was removed and Catherine was returned to the isolation of her room.

From the moment of Paul's birth, the empress behaved as if the child were her own; Catherine had been simply a vehicle for bringing him into the world. Elizabeth had many reasons for holding this point of

~~young girls trained in service and one peasant woman.~~ For sale: a girl of sixteen, of good behavior, and a ceremonial carriage, hardly used. For sale: a girl of sixteen trained in lace-making, able to sew linen, iron, and starch and dress her mistress, in addition to having a pretty face and being well formed.

Anyone wishing to buy an entire family or a young man and a girl separately, may inquire at the silver-washer's opposite the church of Kazan. The young man, named Ivan, is twenty one years old, he is healthy, robust, and can curl a lady's hair. The girl, well-made and healthy, named Marfa, aged fifteen, can do sewing and embroidery. They can be examined and had for a reasonable price.

For sale: domestics and skilled craftsmen of good behavior. Two tailors, a shoemaker, a watchmaker, a cook, a coach-maker, a wheelwright, an engraver, a gilder, and two coachmen, who may be inspected and their price ascertained . . . at the proprietors's own house. Also for sale are three young racehorses, one colt and two geldings, and a pack of hounds, fifty in number. A maid of sixteen for sale, able to weave lace, sew linen, do ironing and starching and to dress her mistress; furthermore, has a pleasing face and figure.

The price of a serf, even one highly skilled, was often less than that of a prize hunting dog. In general, a male serf could be bought for between two hundred and five hundred rubles; a girl or woman would cost between fifty and two hundred rubles, depending on her age, talents, and comeliness. Serfs sometimes changed owners for no price at all. He or she could be bartered against a horse or a dog, and a whole family could be gambled away in a night of cards.

Most serfs worked the soil. But it was the condition and grievances of industrial serfs working in the mines, foundries, and factories of the Urals that posed Catherine's first challenge. Originally, many Urals workers had been state peasants. To encourage the industrialization of Russia, Peter the Great in 1721 had offered these peasants to non-noble entrepreneurs to buy from the state, remove from the land, convert into industrial serfs, and attach permanently to an industrial enterprise. These serfs did not become the private property of the owners; they

Serfdom.

Russia  
18th C.

~~the supreme power of the Russian autocrat by certain "fundamental laws."~~ These "laws" were defined as traditions, habits, and institutions so deeply rooted in the history and life of a society that no monarch, however absolute, could or would act in opposition to them. They included respect for the permanence of the nation's dominant religion, for the law of succession to the throne, and for the existing rights and privileges of dominant social groups, such as the nobility. Montesquieu defined such a state with such a ruler as a "moderate monarchy." In this sense, Catherine was defining and presenting Russia as a moderate autocracy.

Enlightened  
Absolutism

Catherine  
on  
Punishment  
and  
laws

Turning to the role of laws in regulating the lives and relationships of people, Catherine wrote: "The laws ought to be so framed as to secure the safety of every citizen as much as possible. . . . Political liberty does not consist in the notion that a man may do whatever he pleases; liberty is the right to do whatsoever the laws allow. . . . The equality of the citizens consists in that they should all be subject to the same laws." In confronting the great issue of crime and punishment, she wholeheartedly accepted the views of Montesquieu and Beccaria, agreeing that "it is much better to prevent than to punish crimes." She insisted that capital punishment be inflicted only in cases involving political murder, sedition, treason, or civil war. "Experience shows," she wrote, "that the frequent use of severe punishment has never rendered a people better. The death of a criminal is a less effective means of restraining crimes than the permanent example of a man deprived of his liberty during the whole of his life to make amends for the injury he has done to the public." Even sedition and treason were given narrow definitions. She distinguished between sacrilege and lèse-majesté. A sovereign may be said to rule by divine right, but he or she is not divine, and therefore it is neither sacrilege nor treason to commit a nonphysical offense against him. Words cannot be called criminal unless accompanied by deeds. Satirical writings in monarchies, even those relating to the monarch—and here she may have had in mind Voltaire's struggles in France—should be regarded as misdemeanors, not crimes. Even here, care should be taken, because censorship can be "productive of nothing but ignorance and must cramp the rising efforts of genius and destroy the very will for writing."

She rejected torture, traditionally used in extracting confessions,

in "fundamental and institutions that no monarch, them. They in- minant religion, sting rights and ty. Montesquieu onarchy." In this a moderate au-

relationships of ed as to secure cal liberty does pleases; liberty dity of the citi- same laws." In e wholeheart- greeing that "it isted that cap- litical murder, rote, "that the people better. aining crimes rty during the e to the pub- ions. She dis- n may be said herefore it is fense against ed by deeds. e monarch— in France— e, care should ng but igno- roy the very confessions,

obtaining evidence, and determining guilt in Russia. "The use of torture is contrary to sound judgment and common sense," she declared. "Humanity itself cries out against it, and demands it to be utterly abolished." She gave the example of Great Britain, which had prohibited torture "without any sensible inconveniences." She was particularly incensed by the use of torture to force a confession:

What right can give anyone authority to inflict torture upon a citizen when it is still unknown whether he is innocent or guilty? By law, every person is innocent until his crime is proved. . . . The accused party on the rack, while in the agonies of torture, is not master enough of himself to be able to declare the truth. . . . The sensation of pain may rise to such a height, that it will leave him no longer the liberty of producing any proper act of will, except what at that very instant he believes may release him from that pain. In such an extremity, even an innocent person will cry out, 'Guilty!' provided they cease to torture him. . . . Then the judges will be uncertain whether they have an innocent or a guilty person before them. The rack, therefore, is a sure method of condemning an innocent person whose constitution is weak, and of acquitting the guilty who depends upon his bodily strength.

Catherine also condemned torture on purely humanitarian grounds. "All punishments by which the human body might be maimed are barbarism," she wrote.

Catherine wanted punishments tailored to fit the crimes, and the *Nakaz* provided detailed analysis of different categories of crime and the appropriate punishments. Crimes against property, she said, should be punished by deprivation of property, although she understood that those guilty of stealing property were most often people who had none. She insisted that due process govern legal and courtroom procedures. She demanded that attention be paid to the role of judges, the truth of evidence, and the quality of proof required in reaching verdicts.

Some judges should be of the same rank of citizenship as the defendant; that is, his equals, so that he will not think him-

self fallen into the hands of people who will automatically decide against him. Judges should not have the right to interpret the law; only the sovereign, who makes the law, can do that. Judges must judge according to the letter of the law because this is the only way of ensuring that the same crime is judged the same way in all places at all times. If adherence to the law leads to injustice, the sovereign, as lawgiver, will issue new laws.

Catherine's attempt to address the problems of serfdom was the least successful part of the *Nakaz*. She began chapter II, her effort to deal with serfdom, by saying that "a civil society requires a certain established order; there ought to be some to govern and some to obey." In that context, she believed that even the humblest man had the right to be treated as a human being, but here her words collided with the general Russian belief that serfs were property. Even a hint of freeing the serfs met with protest, sometimes from people who prided themselves on their liberalism. Princess Dashkova was so convinced of the right of the nobility to own serfs that she attempted to persuade Denis Diderot of the necessity of serfdom in Russia. Catherine rejected this morally, even if she was politically powerless to change it. When Diderot was in St. Petersburg and criticized the squalor of the Russian peasant, the empress replied bitterly, "Why should they bother to be clean when their souls are not their own?"

Catherine wrote the *Nakaz* in French; her secretary translated her manuscript into Russian and other languages. She worked in private until September 1766, when she began to show drafts, first to Orlov, then to Panin. Orlov's opinion, predictably, was flattering. Panin was cautious; he saw in the *Nakaz* a threat to the whole political, economic, and social order. "These are axioms which will bring down walls," he warned. He worried about the impact that ideas taken from Montesquieu and Beccaria might have on uneducated delegates to the Legislative Commission. He was especially concerned because direct taxation of peasants and army recruitment were based on the institution of serfdom; he feared that without these two essential requirements, the state would wither economically and militarily. Beyond that, he wondered how freed serfs would live, since they possessed no land. He asked where the

~~Turkey's allies, for months now, both Austria and France had been sending help in the form of money and military advisers to the confederates in Poland.~~ Further, she realized that the deep permanent hatred between Orthodox and Catholic Poles was probably going to make Poland an endless military and financial drain. Finally, she knew that for many Russians, including leaders and believers of the Orthodox Church, bringing the Orthodox population of Poland under Russian protection would be enthusiastically welcomed, and that this would be sufficient to quiet those who had wanted more.

In January 1771, while Prince Henry was edging his way through the Russian Christmas and New Year, Austrian troops suddenly crossed the Carpathians and occupied an area in southern Poland. This news reached the empress and Prince Henry at a concert at the Winter Palace. Henry, hearing the news, shook his head and observed, "It seems that in Poland one only has to stoop and help oneself." Catherine picked up his lead and replied, "Why shouldn't we both take our share?" Henry reported this exchange to Frederick with the comment, "Although this was only a chance pleasantry, it is certain that it was not said for nothing and I do not doubt that it will be very possible for you to profit by this occasion."

In March, soon after his brother returned to Berlin, Frederick wrote to Catherine suggesting that, in view of Austria's aggression, perhaps it would be appropriate if Prussia and Russia simply followed her example and took what they wanted. In mid-May the Prussian minister in St. Petersburg reported to Berlin that the empress had consented to a partition of Poland.

A year of negotiation passed before agreement on partition could be reached with Austria. During this year the diplomatic focus was on Maria Theresa. Already alarmed by Russian victories in the Balkans and objecting particularly to any suggestion that the Turks should be replaced on the Danube by the Russians, the Austrian empress committed herself in July 1771 to a secret treaty with Turkey to come to the assistance of this ancient Muslim enemy of the Hapsburgs. Secrets have short lives, however, and when Frederick and Catherine learned of it, they ignored Austria and, on February 17, 1772, signed an agreement to partition Poland. Meanwhile, Maria Theresa's son and co-ruler, Emperor Joseph II, was struggling to persuade his mother that it was in

1st  
Partition  
of  
Poland



state would find the money to compensate landowners for the taken from them and for the land the serfs must farm to survive.

Catherine did not dismiss Panin's reaction. He was not a ~~lady~~ landowner who had many serfs to lose; he had spent twelve years in Sweden and he generally favored reforms. She also found that he was far from alone in his opposition. On completing the original draft of the *Nakaz* early in 1767, she submitted it for review to members of the Senate. "Every part of it evoked division," she said later. "I let them erase what they pleased and they struck out more than half of what I had written." Next, she submitted the draft to certain educated noblemen; they removed half of the remaining articles. With these excisions, the *Nakaz* as finally published amounted to only one-quarter of the text that Catherine had labored two years to produce. This was the limit of absolute monarchy: even an autocrat could not override the views of those whose support she needed to remain in power.

In the version of the *Nakaz* ultimately printed, Catherine's frustration regarding serfdom is apparent in the way she uses language. She writes tentatively, almost apologetically, and then quickly backtracks, contradicts herself, and smothers her message. Thus, her effort to say that serfdom should be a temporary institution, that a ruler should avoid reducing people to slavery, and that the civil laws should guard against the abuse of slaves comes out as a disorganized torrent of jumbled words:

Since the Law of Nature commands Us to labor to the utmost of Our power for the happiness of all people, We are obliged to render the situation of those who are subjected as easy as sound reason will allow. . . . And therefore, to avoid reducing the people to a state of slavery, unless urgent occasion indispensably obliges us to do it; in that case it ought to be done for no private interest, but for the public benefit. However, such occasions seldom or never occur. Of whatever kind subjugation may be, the civil laws should prevent the abuse of slavery, and guard against the dangers which may arise from it.

Two articles that Catherine had copied from Montesquieu were omitted in the final published document. One declared that serfs should be allowed to accumulate sufficient property to buy their freedom; the other that servitude should be limited to six years. To these

Austria's interest to join Frederick and Catherine. This was an excruciating moment for the Austrian empress. She hated and despised the two monarchs; Frederick was a Protestant who had stolen Silesia; Catherine was a usurper who had taken lovers. Maria Theresa was a devout Catholic, and she shuddered at the idea of assisting in despoiling a neighboring Catholic state.

It took time to overcome these scruples, and her son worked hard to set her decision in a larger context than personal feelings. The Austrian empress faced a choice: either she maintained her recently signed treaty with Turkey and had to go to war with Russia with no help from any other European power, or she abandoned the Turks and joined Prussia and Russia in helping herself to another, larger slice of Poland. In the end, Maria Theresa abandoned the Turks. On August 5, 1772, Emperor Joseph II, on his mother's behalf, added his signature to the agreement to partition Poland.

The three partitioning powers sent troops into their newly claimed territories and then demanded that a Polish Diet be called to ratify their aggression. In the summer of 1773, Stanislaus obediently summoned a Diet. Many Polish noblemen and Catholic churchmen refused to attend; some who came were arrested; others accepted bribes and remained silent. The rump Diet then transformed itself into a confederation that did not require a majority decision. In this way, on September 30, 1773, Poland signed the partition treaty formally ceding the land it had already lost.

In what came to be called the First Partition of Poland, the crumbling state lost almost a third of its territory and more than a third of its population. Russia's share was the largest in territory, 36,000 square miles, comprising all of eastern Poland as far as the Dnieper River and the whole course of the river Dvina flowing north toward the Baltic. This area, known as White Russia (now a part of the independent nation of Belorussia) had a population of 1,800,000 people, primarily of Russian stock with Russian identity, traditions, and religion. Prussia's slice of Poland was the smallest, both in area and population: 13,000 square miles, with 600,000 people, predominantly German and Protestant. Frederick was satisfied, at least at that moment. By acquiring the Baltic enclaves of West Prussia and Polish Pomerania, he achieved his goal of uniting his kingdom geographically, stitching the separated province of East Prussia onto Brandenburg, Silesia, and other Prussian territories in Germany. Austria took a substantial piece of southern Poland:

27,000 square miles, including the greater part of Galicia. Maria Theresa acquired the largest number of new subjects: 2,700,000 Poles, overwhelmingly Catholic. A few Poles resisted this aggression, but against the strength of three major powers, they had little success. England, France, Spain, Sweden, and the pope condemned the partition, but no European state was prepared to go to war on behalf of Poland.

Catherine's intervention in Poland was successful. She had returned Russia's frontier to the great trade route of the Dnieper. Two million Orthodox believers could profess their faith unhindered. But she still had important objectives in her war with Turkey. The fact that Russia's western frontier had been brought back to the Dnieper did not mean the opening of that great water route to the Black Sea, because the Turks still controlled the estuary where the river flowed into the sea. Catherine meant to free this river mouth. The war with Turkey continued.

The year 1771 had produced a disappointment on the battlefields. On the Danube, Russian generals had been unable to follow up their victories of 1770. Even though General Vasily Dolgoruky had stormed into the Crimea and overrun the peninsula, this had not inclined the sultan to make peace. Three years of stalemate and frustration followed. Not until the end of 1773 did Russian prospects brighten. In December, Sultan Mustapha III died and was succeeded by his brother, Abdul Hamid. The new sultan, recognizing the unprofitability as well as the danger of continuing the war, decided to end it. Catherine prompted him with a new offensive on the Danube. In June 1774, Rumyantsev crossed the Danube with fifty-five thousand men. On June 9, fifty miles south of the river, a night bayonet attack by eight thousand Russians on forty thousand Turks broke the Turkish lines and led to a crushing Russian victory at Kozludzhi. The grand vizier, fearing that nothing could stop the Russians from reaching Constantinople, sued for peace. Rumyantsev opened direct negotiations in the field, and he and the grand vizier agreed to terms. On July 10, 1774, in an obscure Bulgarian village, the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardzhi was signed. Rumyantsev immediately sent his son to St. Petersburg with the news, and on July 23, Catherine hurried out of a concert to receive it.

The treaty brought Russia greater gains than she had dared to hope for. Catherine traded her conquests on the Danube for more important

Catherine  
and  
Diderot

vice, she paid him a salary of a thousand pounds a year. The following year, when the salary was forgotten and went unpaid, an embarrassed Catherine sent Diderot fifty thousand pounds—to cover fifty years in advance, she said.

The empress's purchase of Diderot's library captured the imagination of literary Europe. Diderot, astonished, wrote to his benefactress: "Great princess, I prostrate myself at your feet. I reach out my arms to you, I would speak to you, but my soul faints, my mind grows cloudy. . . . Oh, Catherine, be sure that you do not reign more powerfully in Petersburg than in Paris." Voltaire joined in: "Diderot, d'Alembert and I—we are three who would build you altars. . . . Would one ever have suspected fifty years ago that one day the Scythians [Russians] would so nobly recompense in Paris the virtue, science, and philosophy that are treated so shamefully among us." From Grimm: "Thirty years of labor have not brought Diderot the slightest recompense. It has pleased the Empress of Russia to pay the debt of France." Catherine's response was, "I never thought that buying Diderot's library would bring me so many compliments."

There was, no doubt, a larger purpose behind her generosity. If so, the gift achieved its objective: Europeans now believed that there were things in the east other than snow and wolves. Diderot threw himself into the task of recruiting artistic and architectural talent for Catherine. His house was turned into an employment agency on her behalf. Writers, artists, scientists, architects, and engineers swarmed to solicit appointments in St. Petersburg.

In 1773, Diderot, who hated to travel and had never before left France, summoned the resolution to embark on the journey to Russia that he felt he owed to Catherine. He was sixty years old, subject to stomach cramps and drafts of cold air, and he was afraid of Russian food. The prospect of crossing Europe to reach a country famous for violence and freezing temperatures was daunting; nevertheless, he felt an obligation to thank his benefactress in person. In May 1773, he set out. He got only as far as The Hague, where he halted for three months to rest with his friend Prince Dmitry Golitsyn.

With autumn approaching, the philosopher set out on the second stage of his journey. Huddled and coughing in a post chaise, he hoped to reach his destination before extreme cold arrived. Unfortunately, it

was snowing in the Russian capital when he arrived on October 8, and he collapsed into bed. The day after his arrival he was awakened by the pealing of bells and the booming of cannon celebrating the wedding of the nineteen-year-old heir to the throne, Grand Duke Paul, to Princess Wilhelmina of Hesse-Darmstadt. Diderot, indifferent to ceremonials, avoided the festivities; this inclination was reinforced by his having nothing to wear other than plain black clothes and by his having left his wig behind somewhere during his journey.

Catherine warmly welcomed the famous editor of the *Encyclopædia*. The man she saw before her possessed a "high brow receding on a half-bald head; large rustic ears and a big bent nose, firm mouth . . . [and] brown eyes, heavy and sad, as if recalling unrecallable errors, or realizing the indestructibility of superstition, or noting the high birth rate of simpletons." The empress had her guest inducted into the Russian Academy of Sciences and then began a series of conversations in her private study. "M. Diderot," she told him at their first meeting, "you see this door by which you have entered. That door will be opened to you every day between three and five in the afternoon." Diderot was charmed by her simplicity and the complete informality of their long, intimate sessions. Catherine would sit on a sofa, sometimes with a piece of needlework in her hands, and her guest would take his place in a comfortable armchair opposite her. Diderot, completely at ease, talked interminably, contradicted her, shouted, gesticulated, and called her "my good lady." The empress laughed at his exuberance and familiarities. He took her hands, shook her arm, and tapped her legs in making his points. "Your Diderot is an extraordinary man," Catherine wrote to Mme Geoffrin. "I emerge from interviews with him with my thighs bruised and quite black. I have been obliged to put a table between us to protect myself and my limbs."

Their conversations roamed widely. With some idea of the topic likely to be discussed, Diderot prepared notes and memoranda, which he then read to the empress; after this preliminary, they both spoke freely. He put before her his views on tolerance, the legislative process, the value of competition in commerce, divorce (which he favored in cases of intellectual incompatibility), and gambling. He begged her to provide Russia with a permanent law of succession. He urged her to introduce the study of anatomy in girls' schools to make the young women better wives and mothers, and help them thwart the wiles of seducers.